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XII.

THE WHITE NILE.

By ISMAIL PACHA.

The following letter from the Governor-General of the African Soudan has been received :

KHARTOUM, JUNCTION OF THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES,)
March 18, 1874.)

ALVAN S. SOUTHWORTH, *Secretary of the American Geographical Society* — DEAR SIR:—When I received your last communication, informing me that the honor of being elected a Fellow of the American Geographical Society had been conferred upon me, you desired me to contribute toward the Society such information as might be of interest. I am happy to say that an opportunity presents itself already to fulfill my duty to the Society. I dare say you will be acquainted with the fact that one of the principal obstructions which explorers and merchants bound for Central Africa, who chose to go by way of the White Nile, had to encounter was the “Sudd,” a great mass of vegetation which in the course of ten years obstructed the navigation of the White Nile entirely, so that only in the rainy season small vessels could reach the Gondokoro by way of the Bahr-el-Giraffe, and in the remainder of the year all communication with the Upper Nile was interrupted. It has been my constant aim to have this obstruction cleared away. I had sent a report of the possibility to achieve this to His Highness the Khedive, and His Highness, in his indefatigable activity for the welfare, happiness and civilization of his countries, immediately ordered me to proceed up the White Nile, inspect the places myself, and suggest the best means of executing the work. I left Khartoum accordingly in February, last year, with 300 soldiers, one steamer and five sailing ships, and the river being low then, I immediately commenced to work with my

men. We carried on the works for about two months, from morning till night. We encountered a serious accident; an enormous portion of the Sudd gave way and surprised us in the middle of the night, five ships were lost and the steamer was upset; in fact, so sudden and so terrible was the approach of the fast mass of Sudd and water that we only escaped by a miracle; many of my people were wounded, but fortunately no lives were lost. As a curiosity, I may mention that an enormous hippopotamus was crushed to death against our steamer. It supplied several excellent meals for my soldiers, who seemed to relish it very much.

After working for two months the Nile rose, and I had to abandon the work until the next season. I consequently returned to Khar-toum, with the intention of recommencing the work as soon as the Nile was down again. His Highness, however, having appointed me since to the Governor-Generalship of Soudan, I was so much engaged with the organization of my new provinces that, to my great regret, I had to leave it to somebody else to conduct the work. I sent 300 men again up the White Nile, and one of the large steamers we had here in December, last year: and, after three months more hard work, the Sudd was entirely cut through and a passage opened for our large steamer, so that even now, when the Nile is down, it passed the whole distance from the point where the Bahr-el-Gazal commences, to the point where the Bahr-el-Giraffe rejoins the Nile, the distance the Sudd extended to; thus communication from Khar-toum to Gondokoro in the main river is opened again after an obstruction of ten years' duration. Any vessel will reach Gondokoro now at any time of the year. It was the best news with which we could possibly welcome the new Governor of the new provinces situated on the White Nile, Col. Gordon, who arrived here last week.

I remain, dear sir, etc, the Governor-General of the Soudan,

ISMAIL PACHA AYOUB.